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CONVERSATIONS WITH PRINCE BISMARCK

FRIEDRICHSRUH, 1887-1890

BY W. B. RICHMOND

WHAT I am about to write is an arrangement of notes made, and from letters written, at Friedrichsrüh in November and December of 1887. My going there came about thus: I was staying with Sir Edward Malet, then British Ambassador at Berlin, and painting his and Lady Ermyntrode's portraits. To paint a head of Prince Bismarck was my ambition. Sir Edward very kindly wrote to the Prince and told him so; he acceded to our joint request. I was joyous, though, I confess, not a little nervous at the idea of presenting myself, quite unknown to him personally, before the Iron Chancellor. Iron, no doubt, when it was needful; but that side of his character I did not see. I saw a singularly distinguished, highly cultivated, courteous gentleman, whose disposition was kindly, nervous, and sensitive.

While making the journey from Berlin, I resolved to write down every evening the conversation of the day, and to do so as far as possible verbatim, a matter of no great difficulty, because the Prince not only spoke English very well, but very slowly; a habit, I am told, he maintained when speaking German. He spoke clearly, and his manner was most impressive; so it was not difficult to recall his words as well as the matter of them.

I was forewarned that his duties were so many and so exacting that I should be lucky if I persuaded him to give me an hour's sitting during a day, and that, being a martyr to neuralgia, it was imperative for his health's sake he should be much in the open air. The Prince kindly permitted me to be his companion during his drives and his walks and during his hours of relaxation after dinner.

Arrived at Friedrichsruh, I was met by Count Rantzau, the Prince's son-in-law. He took me to the house—I say house, for it is not a palace—and to my bedroom, where he left me, and I began to unpack.

Presently a sound of slow and shuffling footsteps was arrested before my door, which was thrown open somewhat abruptly without a previous knock. A very tall, pale man, whose head appeared to be small for the huge scale of his body and limbs, swathed round the neck with a white silk handkerchief ending in a loose bow, and dressed in black, stood in the doorway, erect and dignified. It was the Great Chancellor. I approached him and made my bow, whereon he removed his slouch-hat, and without the slightest inclination of his head he put out a small, delicately formed, white hand which warmly shook mine. That was sufficient; instantly I was at my ease. Speaking in a remarkably soft, mellow voice and of vibrating *timbre*, he said in perfect English: “I am delighted to welcome you. But I fear you will find me a tiresome sitter; for I am old, very tired, and I suffer; the affairs of State take up all my time, and my hours of strength are few—alas! But I will do what I can to meet your wishes. I need to be much in the open air, and I shall be glad if you will accompany me in my walks.”

That was the introduction, and what could be kinder, more thoughtful, or more hospitable? Rather abruptly, as we were going to lunch, Bismarck said: “You know Mr. Gladstone, I believe? Give him a message from me, please. Tell him that while he is busy cutting down trees I am busy planting them.” For Bismarck was devoted to forestry and arboriculture. Consequently I delivered that message to Mr. Gladstone, who either did not see, or did not desire to recognize, the double meaning contained in it. Anyhow, the message fell quite flat. Anent Mr. Gladstone, Bismarck made a remark, whether true or not, was very characteristic of his epigrammatic style of criticism: “Your Prime Minister is poisoned by the venom of his oratory; if his facility of diction and his command of words were more restrained, he would not be so great an orator but a more reliable statesman.” The two great politicians would, I believe, have struck few chords of sympathy; they would have hardly come into touch at all excepting upon one subject, where they would have been in perfect agreement—their deeply religious reverence for the Great Unseen Power.

I offered to present Bismarck with an engraving of my portrait of Mr. Gladstone, for which he thanked me. "I shall be glad to receive it, for while I do not agree with his statesmanship, I have a deep admiration for his extraordinary versatility." Whether it was ironical or not, I cannot say. "If God spares him, Mr. Gladstone will ruin England." This was said in conjunction with some remarks upon Home Rule for Ireland: "No government could afford to grant it now; it is too late. It would wreck a Tory or Radical ministry to do so, especially now when Imperialism has been so deftly established in the public minds of Englishmen by Disraeli," speaking of whom Bismarck said: "I like him; he is a great statesman and he takes his port like a man. Your politicians do not drink enough. Think of Pitt and Fox—whom have you now to compare with those 'two-bottle men,' whose decisions were prompt, decisive, and virile? Now you have given your drink to the lower classes, who are becoming your masters, and dangerous ones, too, by and by, when the franchise is extended practically to universal suffrage. Every Southerner is born with a bottle of champagne in him; to be quits the Northerner must drink one." With Bismarck's eulogiums upon the value of alcohol there is likely to be little sympathy among us. I suspect that his statements should be taken figuratively; he had no sympathy with apathy or procrastination. "Strike swiftly and strike well" was probably his motto.

Of Disraeli he spoke with something like personal affection. The facile Hebrew enchanted the intense and patriotic Saxon. Bismarck's consideration for his colleague Disraeli at the Berlin Conference is verified by the following story. "The diplomatic language to be employed was French," said Bismarck. "Disraeli refused to speak in it, a tongue with which he was not familiar. He spoke in English. Prince Gortschakoff, who knew and spoke English perfectly, took exception to that proceeding; but I, as President of the Council, determined to back up Disraeli, and made my reply also in English, whereon Gortschakoff replied in it; so we won."

Bismarck's acquaintance with our literature was very wide. He quoted Shakespeare constantly; of Browning he said: "I am sorry not to have followed his literary career as a poet so closely as I should have wished to do, for he is a great poet and a great thinker." Horace was

his favorite classical author. He repeated many of the "Odes" and "Epodes" in a very magnificent style. His beautiful and sympathetic voice made his recitation a real delight to listen to. Thackeray was his ideal novelist. "His characters are men and women; each, as in Shakespeare, stands out from its background; is solid, clearly cut out, and finished *ad unguem*." Fielding's style enchanted him, and *Tom Jones* he pronounced to be "a real classic."

He was somewhat down on Dr. Johnson's manners to women. He reproved the great lexicographer's habit of mingling his admirations and disapprobations to ladies in too personal a manner. "Courtesy," said he, "costs nothing; a little of it would have saved Dr. Johnson from some rudeness and not a little acrid ill-humor." Talking of the arts, he said: "Of music I am very fond, but now I have to abstain from hearing it, because tears come only too readily into my eyes. My heart is stronger than my head. Indeed, what self-control I have has been bought by experience." Many instances occurred during our conversations which gave the truth to this assertion.

The extreme mobility of his countenance and the various shades of expression which passed over it told of a sensitive, emotional temperament. "But I have a fire within me still which burns at times with fury." Upon that I asked, "Are you in reality the Iron Chancellor?" "No," he said, "not naturally; the iron I have created to use when necessary." And that I believe to be true.

I asked him if he knew Wagner personally. "Yes," he answered; "but it was quite impossible for me to care for him or to encourage his society. I had not time to submit to his insatiable vanity. Before breakfast, at breakfast, before and after dinner, Wagner demanded sympathy and admiration. His egotism was wearisome and intolerable, and his demand for a listener was so incessant that I was obliged to avoid his company. I was too busy with my affairs to be able to give him all or even a portion of the demands he would have claimed upon my time. But I admire his music greatly, though I have been compelled to give up going to the opera, because the beautiful and touching melodies I cannot get out of my head; they cling to me, and I find it difficult to release myself from them, and now it tires me to be so much moved."

Speaking of his young life, he said: "I do not know that

it was a bad thing for me that I led a fast life; it burned out a lot of useless fire which, had I retained, might have rendered the restraint of ardor and rashness of impulses more difficult than has been the case with me. My busy, complicated, and arduous duties have obliged me to exercise self-control vigorously and constantly." Talking about education and of what it was forty years ago and is now, he remarked: "Boasted as it is, and truly, perhaps, that education is more generally supplied and wider in its scope, it is not so solid or so sound as it was in my young days. We were taught fewer subjects, no doubt, but what we learned we learned thoroughly. My sons had far greater advantages of general education than I had; but they returned from the Lyceum very ignorant. I must say that my Greek I have forgotten; but my Latin I keep up and still enjoy."

I had with me and was reading at the time Professor Mahaffy's *Greek Life and Customs*. He took up the book, looked at its title, and said: "What the devil have we to do with Greek Life and Custom? It is German and English life that you and I should study. The Greeks are dead; but England and Germany are alive."

Upon the evening of this day, a learned doctor, Dr. Chrysander, an authority on Handel, dined at the Prince's table. The conversation turned upon Helmholtz's theories of acoustics and vibration. Upon this, as upon every other subject, Bismarck was evidently extremely well informed.

It is not out of place here to tell a story about Bismarck which relates to his apparent want of interest in the conduct of the King's Museum. At a party at Dr. Lippman's, the distinguished Keeper of Prints in the Museum, upon the previous evening of my going to Friedrichsrhuh, the conversation turned upon the almost entire lack of interest which the Prince took in regard to that institution. It was stated that he had only once entered the building, getting no farther than the hall, and that that visit was occasioned by a sudden heavy shower of rain which overtook him umbrellaless. I was asked to tell Bismarck the story and to inquire if it was a true one. Upon the first evening of my sojourn at Friedrichsrhuh I fulfilled the promise and told him the story current about him, at the same time begging him to tell me if the story was reliable. He smiled, and, puffing vigorously at his pipe for a few seconds, a habit of his when not quite sure of his answer, he said: "The story

is quite true, and I regret that it is so; there is a reason for it, though perhaps it may not be thought to be a sufficient one. For twenty-five years," he went on to say, "but few moments of my time I have been able to call my own, and I can take no rest while my master lives." I determined to push the question further, and said: "Then, sir, you have but little idea of the minute and elaborate machine which is constantly in motion for the benefit of the History of the Graphic Arts, and of an organization as complete and systematized in all its ramifications of details as your great army system is. To keep an elaborate extension up to date by the provision of examples of the fine arts in their various classes and branches so as to worthily represent the culture of Germany, I am told that the state grant to the Museum is very inadequate." "I know that it is; but how can we vote more than we do at a time like the present? Germany is a new empire and it must be protected from possible assault by one or two or both Powers, one to the east, the other to the west of us. You must remember that the next war between France and Germany will mean extinction for one. We lie between two lines of fire: France is our bitter enemy, and Russia I do not trust. Peace may be far more dishonorable than war, and for war we must be prepared. Therefore, while Germany's very life as a nation is at stake, I cannot give the attention that I should otherwise wish to do as regards the encouragement of the arts of peace, however much I may believe them to be, as you say, necessary to the highest development of a nation as a whole." The answer was conclusive; what more could be said?

Though the coming story is the result of a visit to Berlin in 1890, it is characteristic of both Bismarck and Mommsen. I had gone to Berlin to fulfil a promise to the great historian to make a drawing of that most interesting man, a keen wit, too, if somewhat caustic, and whose memory was phenomenal. I was drawing; he was quoting Byron—his favorite English poet, as, oddly enough, he is of so many Germans—when a telegram was brought in to me from Friedrichsruh. "That is from Bismarck?" "Yes, Professor." "Does he want you?" "Yes." "When?" "To-morrow." "But you cannot go, for you are engaged to Mommsen." "I am, and I will telegraph to say so." "No—stop. You shall go and see that *great maker of his-*

tory. But you will tell me all about him on your return. So!" I told Bismarck the story of the telegram and what followed. His reply was: "Tell Mommsen that if I make history, he is the greatest historian in the world." When I repeated this epigram to the Professor later on, he smiled one of those inimitable smiles, and his bright black eyes sparkled with humor: "Bismarck never told the truth with greater veracity." It was most interesting to have the opportunity of comparing the minds of those two giants of intellect, the one a Caesar in theory, the other in practice—hating each other's political standpoints with savage intensity, but each holding the other in the highest esteem intellectually.

To go back to '87, during one of our short sittings, Bismarck turned suddenly to me and said: "I wish to appear to the English *myself*. The English regard me too much as the man of Iron. I think you see something else than that in me." As indeed I did.

Speaking of our system of government officials, he asked: "Why do you not have a permanent Minister of War who does not change with the incoming of each Ministry?" I replied that I thought it arose from the fact that our system was founded upon party government. "That seems so strange to me," he answered. "Everything in England appears to be regulated by amateurs, not specialists, who with each change of government have to learn their business afresh. Parliamentary government is an excellent thing when all goes well; but war is a serious affair. All that appertains to the organization for it can only be managed satisfactorily by a permanent expert always at the head, not by fluctuations of opinion, either Radical or Tory. The whole management of the army system should be under one permanent and responsible head, who can put his finger upon a wire and at any moment set it vibrating." Of our unpreparedness for war he spoke with emphasis; he was "despondent" about England's neglect of that matter. "War," he said, "would solve many of your internal difficulties. It would bring classes and parties together. You have too many coteries and factions; you are so split up as regards both politics and religion; you have grown to be so anarchical." I said, "Socialistic—do you mean?" "No," he said. "Socialism is a power, and one that must be met somehow by wise legislation. I meant anarchical."

He proceeded: "War would teach England that she must be one of the strong military Powers, not perhaps so much as naval, and this for the sake of the peace of Europe. The natural alliance is," he said, "England, Germany, and Italy; these three Powers, if placed upon a permanently strong war footing, would insure the peace of the world against France and Russia. In the event of war with France and Russia we could place three millions of men into the field, one million upon the Russian frontier, one million on the French, and still retain a million reserves. We can raise, clothe at a short notice, all told, four millions of reserves, inclusive; and," repeated the Chancellor, slowly, reverently, with emotion and force, "indeed, I believe that unless God Himself commands the French forces in the next war, Germany must be victorious."

"My great-grandfather was killed in the French wars under Frederick; my grandfather fought in '92; my father in '15; and I have fought the French since '70. But in the next struggle with France, which God forbid, we shall wait till her armies come to us. The French have raised such strong and so many fortifications since '70 that our advance would be out of the question, and we could not entertain the possibility of a successful advance as we did then. We should wait and attack them in the field; and if God gives us a chance we will deal with them as we did then."

For the French nation Bismarck had contempt, though he had personal friends in Paris. He liked Napoleon; he spoke of him as an agreeable and courteous man; but he thought that the Empress had not a good influence over him on account of her strong Catholic sympathies, which he thought were dangerous to the State. "Napoleon had a good heart, but he was too easily influenced by women. That is a great mistake; women and the serious facts of life should never come into touch." I ventured to disagree with him, and quoted our Queen as an instance to the contrary. "In a constitutional government such as yours, it does not matter if the throne is occupied by a king or a queen." I again ventured to say that much of England's prosperity during this century was due to the example set by Her Majesty, and that although the Queen is in all essentials a constitutional monarch, her political and personal influence are widespread and all for good. "Probably that is so. But I think that the English place woman on a

higher scale of intelligence than Germans do." We did not pursue the subject further.

Again, speaking of Home Rule, the Chancellor said: "However unwise to my thinking it would have been to have granted Home Rule to Ireland at all, it might have been granted when it was first proposed; but now, after the subject has been so widely discussed, so applauded on one side, and so abused on the other, any Government that gave it would be weakened in the eyes of Europe, and the colonies of England would be in danger by such a concession. It would certainly weaken England's hold upon India; Russian spies and Russian influence would exert themselves and aid any agitation started by the Indian press, with a view to obtaining a like concession for India."

Apropos of Russian designs in the East, he spoke confidently: "Russia means to get to the Persian Gulf. She will annex Persia; but," he said confidently, "I do not think that India as a whole, Mohammedans or Hindus, will prefer Russian to English rule. But if they do, it will be the fault of the English, who have unwisely given freedom to the Press; for I know how dangerous an experiment that is, and how men educated, but wholly without principle and a sense of truth, can and do distort facts to a most dangerous degree. And if this applies to educated persons and a well-informed people, how infinitely more dangerous it is to grant such like license to be used or misused by a people both unenlightened and ill-informed. It was, to my thinking, a most perilous latitude for you to have granted to India."

Of the Russian language Bismarck spoke with enthusiasm. "It is," he said, "like the Greek, full of niceties of gradation and form." But how it had grown to such perfection he did not know, for every peasant speaks the same language as the Emperor does, as pure and as good; and he instanced this fact as a proof that the civilization of a nation does not of necessity keep pace with the developments and perfections of its language. A remark of mine that the Slav races were not "effete" and that their barbaric elements were a backbone and stand-by against their falling a too easy prey to the defects which civilization so often carried with it, drew from him a long and interesting sketch of the luxury of Rome under the later empires which finally fell under Teutonic races. I was much struck by a laconic remark which the Chancellor made after a long

pause, accompanied by slow but violent puffs at his pipe: "Who shall say, perhaps the East holds the future keys of Europe—China, Russia, or both."

In 1848 Bismarck was in England—that is, at the time of the revolution in Germany. He said he had thoroughly enjoyed himself. His love of the English beer and his ready wit made him popular. Of this time he told me the following interesting story. "It was, I think, to Greenwich that I was invited to dine. We went on board a steamer at Waterloo Bridge, and passed some time going down the river. I forget the names of the English on board, but I well remember the excellent wine and beer and the genial company. After-dinner speeches were made; my health was drunk, to which I responded. At the end of the repast I rose and proposed the following toast: 'For England a fleet that shall command the seas, and an army for Germany that shall defy Europe—hence Peace!'" And turning to me he said: "And I think so now."

I was anxious to make a drawing of Moltke, and I told Bismarck so. "It might be done," he said. "You would find him very reserved. He is a very quiet, grave man, good and religious, but extremely fond of money. He lives with the parsimony of a sergeant; that is his one defect. Otherwise he has a great nature."

Of his early life Bismarck spoke very unreservedly, and also of his own nature and the difficulties which it had occasioned him. "It was my original intention as a young man to travel, and between the age of twenty and thirty I intended to see the world. But when the time came, I did not like to leave my father, whom I loved and respected deeply. I was soon caught in the meshes of politics; whoever gets into them escapes with great difficulty. My father would not permit me to go into the army. If I had done so, the discipline would have kept me away from riotous living; and so in my old age my health would have been stronger." I said: "That might have been so; but you were caught in the meshes of politics in time and you created an empire." "Yes," he said, "that is so. But still I regret that my time has been my own to such a limited extent."

Speaking of self-control, he said: "I have had to *drill* myself; under circumstances of pain of mind or body work is my great object and chief solace." Indeed, during the

time that I was at Friedrichsruh I saw the Chancellor hard at work over State papers while suffering agonies from neuralgia, both his eyelids having been drawn down over his inflamed and swollen eyes by the acute pain.

“Often as a young man, when drunkenness, shouting, and all kinds of riotous ways were going on, which were in those days thought part of a gentleman’s inheritance, and after drinking six bottles of wine while every kind of disturbance was going on, I was able to abstract my mind so as to find the cube roots of two or several given numbers.

“My childhood was wretched; my mother was harsh and ambitious; but my father was a great and good man.” We talked about the education of children, of whom the Chancellor was extremely fond; and he spoke most feelingly regarding the kindness which ought to govern all our approaches toward their highly wrought and sensitive natures. “Children are excellent judges of men; their instincts as regards character are rarely at fault. The family life is the fatherland upon a small scale. It has been a principle of my life never to permit my hot temper to find an outlet within my own home.”

Indeed, no one who has enjoyed the privilege of sharing the simple and noble family life in Friedrichsruh could ever forget the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity that reigned there. To his servants, to his dependants, to his cottagers, the Prince was both friend and counselor. I have seen him go into a peasant’s hut, pat the *frau* on the back, take her hand, encourage her children, and even engage in a little delicate chaff and banter. The answer to such spontaneous goodness of heart was a respectful, though by no means a timid, reception of it. I remember that one evening the head woodman for the estate came in to talk forestry; he was received by the Prince and his family as a friend. He seated himself without the least ceremony, smoked and drank and discoursed with every one upon equal terms, quite simply, quite unostentatiously. The mixture of courtesy and an almost rustic straightforwardness and dignity of bearing rendered Bismarck an ideal master, landlord, and host.

Continuing to speak of his youth, and while we were talking of the value of prayer, he said: “When I was fourteen, I remember thinking that prayer was useless or irrelevant, for it struck me that God knew better than I; and I still

think so, except that now I hold that the value of prayer is that it implies submission to a stronger power than our own; and I am convinced of the existence of that Power, which is neither *arbitrary nor capricious*."

We talked of the probability of a future life. "I do not doubt it," he said, earnestly, "even for a moment. This life is too sad, too incomplete, to satisfy our highest aspirations and desires. It is meant to be a struggle to ennoble us. Can that struggle be vain? I think not! Final perfection I believe in; a perfection which God has in the end in store for us."

Roman Catholicism he did not like at all. He regarded it as most dangerous, not only to the State, but to real progress. Of the Pope, however, as a personality he spoke with great respect. "I find him very intelligent; his Latin verses are delightful, and he is a statesman. His position as Head of the Catholic Church is far stronger now than it was as a temporal sovereign. The States of the Church had by the natural sequence of events become so small that they were not worth the wrangle to keep them. And," he added, with a touch of humor, "you know that His Holiness conferred upon me the highest honor which it is within his power to bestow upon a *heretic*."

Of birds, as well as of animals (we all know of his great affection for his dogs), Bismarck was extremely fond. "I love my birds, but I want my squirrels also. You see," he said, pointing up to the branches of trees in an avenue near the house, "those little boxes fixed in the spurs of the branches. They have a swing door which a bird can easily push open; and it shuts behind her. So when in her little house, the bird and her eggs are safe, and Herr Squirrel is hoaxed. Thus I keep him as well as my birds."

One day, after having received a very short sitting in the morning, I went down to the dining-room rather late for luncheon. The Prince was seated and had already begun his meal. Somewhat impulsively, but also persuasively, I put both my hands upon his shoulders and begged him for ten minutes more of his time that day. In a moment the huge boar-hound, always with his master, mounted on his hind legs and intercepted my familiarity, giving an ominous though not savage growl, only to serve as a warning. It was enough; the reprimand was sufficient, and I respect the beast for his loyalty to his master's dignity.

And now I will relate two or three stories which Bismarck told me with his characteristic terseness, point, and brevity.

“At the battle of Königgratz I had great difficulty in keeping my Master out of the range of fire. The bullets filled the air with song. I told His Majesty so. ‘Oh,’ he replied, ‘is that the noise of bullets? I thought it was made by the chirping of sparrows.’ Presently I persuaded him to ride out of danger, and he did so, but very reluctantly, and only at a slow canter. I knew that the Austrian outposts were firing from a copse not more than three hundred yards away; therefore the King was in imminent danger. I released my right foot from its stirrup, keeping my horse a little to the rear of the King’s, and kicked its rump, which took effect. The horse sprang forward at a gallop. My Master turned round and gave me a reproachful look; but he took the hint and rode out of danger. That same evening he telegraphed to Queen Augusta, ‘Bismarck took me somewhat rudely from the field.’ Upon another occasion at the same battle a shell burst within ten paces of the King and his staff. They felt the earth heave as in an earthquake, but no one moved. Fortunately the shell did not explode; if it had exploded the King and his staff would probably have been killed. My Master did not know what fear meant.”

During the last evening of my stay at Friedrichsruh Bismarck was at his best; he was in excellent spirits. After dinner we lit pipes, and well-filled tankards of beer were handy. The Prince seated himself in his long arm-chair, put his feet upon a leg rest, and evidently he was settled down for a good talk.

He asked me what I should like him to relate. I said: “Pray, sir, tell me any story that comes into your head.” Puffing vigorously at his pipe, the following story was slowly developed.

“My grandfather served for three years under Frederick the Great, and told me this anecdote: An ensign made a blunder during the manœuvres of troops at a review. The King, as was his wont when annoyed, fell into a violent rage and pursued the terrified ensign stick in hand. The young soldier ran for very life, and jumped a ditch, leaving the King upon the other side shaking his stick at him in a fury. Shortly after the escape of the ensign the Colonel of the regiment came up to the King and said, ‘Your Maj-

esty, the young man committed a blunder, doubtless. I have just received his resignation from Your Majesty's service,' placing the document into the King's hands. 'I am sorry for it, for he was a good officer; but he can take no other step under the circumstances.' The King answered, 'Send him to me.' The ensign was sent for, and came trembling, lest this time the stripes should in reality fall upon his shoulders, or, still worse, he might be sent to prison. Without any preface the King replied, 'Here is your captaincy, sir, which I endeavored to give you this morning; but you ran away so swiftly that my old legs could not catch you up.' One can imagine the delight of the ensign when he found that he was the recipient of promotion and not of blows."

The Prince then gave me a graphic account of the capitulation of the Emperor of France, which contained details which I have not found recounted elsewhere. I give this story, I believe, almost word for word.

"Upon the day after the battle of Sedan the French Emperor sent for me at five in the morning. I had had but three hours of bed, and much did I need rest; for forty-eight hours I had taken no food. Immediately upon the receipt of the summons I mounted my horse and rode at full gallop for some four English miles to the appointed meeting-place upon the Donchery road. It is customary in Germany, when an officer or official is sent for to meet a crowned head in the open, to ride up to him at full speed, whether he is on foot, horseback, or in a carriage, and to rein one's horse in suddenly and immediately upon nearing him. I did so, and my horse slid several feet along the road before I finally pulled it up short at the side of the Emperor's carriage. During my ride I resolved to treat the Emperor with the like deference which I should have shown His Majesty at Versailles. I dismounted and held my horse, for I was alone, without groom. The Emperor took off his cap to me, and I saluted him in the ordinary military fashion. Raising my hand, it passed over my revolver, and I noticed that the Emperor became deadly white; for what reason at that moment I cannot say. I said, 'What are Your Majesty's orders?' He replied, 'I wish to see the King!' I informed him that the King was twenty miles away. Napoleon said, 'Is there no place to which we can retire and talk without being disturbed?' We

were near Donchery; upon the roadside was a weaver's cottage, to which we walked. The housewife was at work at her loom. Her husband, a great big Frenchman with a huge mustache, entered the cottage immediately after us. He did not remove his hat. I said to him: 'Take your hat off; this is your Emperor.' He obeyed, but did not seem to be the least moved. His manner was entirely apathetic. Speaking to the housewife, I asked her if there was a room to which we could adjourn; saying nothing, she pointed to a rickety staircase, up which we walked. At the top of it was a chamber furnished with a pine table and two chairs. We sat down, and the Emperor immediately began to discuss the question of the capitulation of the army. I told the Emperor that I could not treat with him upon that subject; it was out of my province. He replied: 'I cannot go back to Sedan. I have given myself to you as a prisoner.' I asked him if he would make proposals for peace. He answered: 'How can I? I am a prisoner. Such proposals can only go to your King from Paris.' I did not then know that the Republic was upon the eve of being proclaimed. At this time we could and would have reinstated the Emperor; the army might have received him back. The authorities in Paris kept me waiting for a whole fortnight. I could wait no longer, and I signed for the Republic. And I do not now regret that I did so, though at the time I did not feel at all sure that it would not be wise to restore the Empire. For perhaps an hour I remained making conversation, but avoiding the subject of the capitulation of the army. As I have said, I had been forty-eight hours without food; my clothes were mud-stained; I was black with the atmosphere of battle, and I made those facts a plea for going to find suitable lodgings for the Emperor, and so I took my leave of him. Afterwards the King and Emperor met, and there were tears shed on both sides. I did not see Napoleon again except as he was passing through Cassel. The train containing him and his suite was at the station. I noticed that his carriages were in perfect order and clean, as though they had just come out of the coach-house of Versailles instead of having passed through three months' campaign. I took off my hat to him, and he saluted me in like manner. Napoleon was a brave man. He was in ill-health all through the war, and his nerves were completely shattered. He had

lived too much under the dominion of the Empress, who had a great deal to do with his entering upon the war. I would have put him back on the throne; the opportunity occurred for me to do so, but, as I said, I do not now regret the turn which politics took."

I asked Bismarck if the moment of his capitulation was not a terrible one to Napoleon. "No," he said, "I think not. There had been seditious meetings in the French army the night before the battle, and I feel sure that he felt safer with us than he would have done among his own people. I regarded the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine with misgiving. Moltke insisted upon it as a necessity. Russia made a great mistake when she created another Poland for herself by taking Bessarabia."

And now I have come to the end of the space which the Editor has granted me. Indeed, I fear that I have exceeded it. Bismarck, as he appeared to me, was not only the strongest personality that I have met, but was among the most courteous and attractive.

W. B. RICHMOND.